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Guest Editor's Introduction

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Introduction

The Revolution Is Now Being Televised and Tweeted: Black Protest, Preaching, and (Re)Presentations, from the Black Arts Movement to #BlackLivesMatter, c.1965-2016

Sherlynn Allen-Harris

The role that social media play in today's digital age cannot be minimized. It is as American as apple pie, and as global as the speed of light, transmitting social messages around the world in a split second. Those who have for many years meandered along the byways of the information superhighway, resisting its magnetic pull, are now taking to the on-ramps with lightning speed.

Indeed, the late American inventor and engineer, Douglas Englebart, saw the advent of the digital age as revolutionary, stating, "The digital revolution is far more significant than the invention of writing or even of printing." In light of the inevitability of humans embracing this and other forms of digital communication, it stands to reason that every aspect of the human experience is impacted by the myriad ways information is transmitted.

The contributions for this issue of *The Journal of Traditions and Beliefs* are illustrative of the significance of the way humans choose to communicate in today's world, and the impact of such communication.

In "The Value of Black Lives," Lauren Grimes writes about this new age of the rise of social media such as Twitter, and one of its unofficial sub-groupings, #BlackTwitter, as a platform providing insider access and a place to communicate with other users about black cultural knowledge. Indeed, only insiders are thought to understand "#BlackTwitter."

The energy and impulse of the hashtag movement in the digital world travels far and wide in cyberspace. One of the most noteworthy of the hashtags is "#Resistance," which has been very successful in mobilizing disparate groups of individuals to act on their distaste for today's virulently partisan politics, and the walking back of past social gains; especially those made by people of color and women over the past fifty years. The Rev. Dr. William Barber's "#MoralMovement" is an example of a shift in the manner in which people are uniting around issues. His Moral Mondays Fusion Movement brings people together based on shared values rather than shared politics alone.

Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno are husband and wife filmmakers and lifelong Newark, New Jersey residents who use film as a medium for social activism. In their documentary film, *Revolution '67*, they examine the social ills that impacted the Newark community, thereby lighting the fuse that erupted into several days of violent civil unrest in the summer of 1967. Their essay includes links to an excerpt from the film and curriculum materials to assist educators in teaching this important period in Newark's history.

The Bongiorno's feature-length documentary, *The Rule*, suggests that Newark is faced with many of the same challenges that plagued the city fifty years earlier and sparked the '67 rebellion. They look to education as one answer to avoiding another outbreak of rebellion and improving the lives of residents. *The Rule* also profiles a successful alternative school for boys operated out of Newark Abbey, staffed by Benedictine monks. The young men are taught that

they themselves are stakeholders in the wellbeing of their community and that they have a vested interest in preparing themselves to be leaders in the improvement of `Newark moving forward.

In addition to my editorial, this issue also includes a letter from Dr. Regennia Williams, “The Legacy of Gil Scott-Heron.” and a letter from one of Gil Scott-Heron’s former students, Linwood “Gato” Martinez-Bentley.